

# Why We Will Fight #13

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By Mike Vanderboegh, 1ACR

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Why We Will Fight, #13  
4 July 1998

In This Issue:

\*\* Independence Day: The Declaration & What It Cost

\*\* And From The Wall Street Journal Editorial Page of All Places:

"Statesmanship and Its Betrayal" By Mark Helprin

An Eloquent Indictment of An Administration and a Generation.

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"The sentiments of men are known, not only by what they receive, but what they reject also."  
-- Thomas Jefferson, 1776.

"Times like this call up genius which slept before and stimulate it in action."  
-- David Ramsey.

Some Independence Day Musings from the Editor:

There is a new fad abroad in the land, out past where the impulse of resistance to tyranny trips on the twin strands of intellectual barbed wire named inferiority complex and half-baked analysis. This fad, part defiance, part defeatist, is exemplified by individual "Declarations of Independence" as well as separatist movements such as the Republic of Texas and the "Great White Northwest" fallacy.

Such public gestures of weakness and futility make for poor television (witness the ROT debacle) and even poorer principle. They presuppose that we, the defenders of the American Republic as envisioned by the Founders, cannot win the national political argument over whether the Constitution shall remain as the basis of our government (as opposed to the oligarchic statist empire the Clintonistas and their backers would impose upon us). We have lost the ability to win in the larger theatre, these defeatists seem to say, so let us retreat to our "redoubts" (of whatever kind) and die gloriously to the last man, the last woman, the last child, or at least, the last fax machine.

The only thing surprising about such faux-Alamos is that their proponents are surprised that so few of their fellow Americans (who are, after all, mostly an eminently sensible people) are willing to follow them to defeatist glory or ignominious federal lockup. This is what comes of self-made "Generals" seeking personal Waterloos without first checking that they have an army to fight with.

I have always been amused by that brand of Texan who declaims "Remember the Alamo!" when the call "Remember San Jacinto!" would be more appropriate. Of course it is easier to die in battle for your country and your cause than it is to stay alive, get organized and win the war for those very things. That is the seductive thing about such schemes. They play to our best attributes (courage, defiance against all odds, self-sacrifice) as well as to our darker qualities (self-doubt, laziness, inability to see the larger picture). Many's the Texan who knows every detail of Travis, Bowie and Crockett at the Alamo, yet gets a little fuzzy about Sam Houston, who despite disobedient subordinates finally won Texas independence at San Jacinto. I wonder why it is that

no one then or today declaims "Remember Goliad!": where another disobedient Houston subordinate surrendered his command to Santa Ana only to have them all slaughtered as helpless prisoners. The commander who sees only the terrain and the enemy before him has already lost his own battle and contributes nothing to the successful conclusion of his cause apart from increasing the martyrs' list.

Whether it is self-defeating separatist standoffs, criminal schemes wrapped in a "patriot" blanket such as the Freemen or individual breast-beating "Declarations of Independence" the result is the same-- a by-now-discredited practice of individual sacrifice without advancing the larger cause. It is the political equivalent of public masturbation: it may make the practitioner feel good temporarily, but it makes the neighbors stare, offends their sensibilities and causes them to hide their children. In addition, they usually call the cops. It also makes no babies, if offspring are what you're after.

I have no need of another Declaration of Independence, individual or otherwise, nor do any other Americans serious about restoring our constitutional Republic-- the Founder's took care of that for us, on another Fourth of July long ago.

If I have need of reassuring myself as to Why We Will Fight to defend our right to the free exercise of arms, I will refer to that source document of American liberty, rather than presume to make up my own. The names have changed (instead of King George the Third of England, we now have King William the Worst of Arkansas, Master of the Executive Order), but the grievances of liberty-loving Americans and the means for their redress are the same.

Such eternal principles, and what they cost, are the subject of the two articles reprinted below. The first piece was forwarded to me by Arlin Adams, who got it from Matt Anderson, who got it from Kenneth Emmanuelson (my thanks to all, and gee, ain't the Internet wonderful? And powerful? No wonder Al Gore wants to get his hands on it.) It should be read today of all days, not just to better appreciate our ancestor's sacrifices, but to gauge our own willingness to give all that their sacrifices shall not have been in vain.

The second essay, a speech really, is by Mark Helprin and was originally given to the Shavano Institute of Hillsdale College. It was reprinted in the form below on Thursday's Wall Street Journal editorial page, of all places. It enunciates some of those timeless principles dealt with by the Founders, and is an indictment of the present Administration and the generation of Americans which tolerates and supports it. It is eloquent beyond the exquisite. I wish I could write half as well. It is a fitting gift to our readers on this Independence Day.

-- Mike Vanderboegh, 1ACR

Editor, Why We Will Fight and The John Doe Times My Motto: "Trust in the Lord, Walk in the Light, Speak the Truth, Carry a .45, and Count On Competent Fire Support."

4th of July: What Happened to the Signers?

Date: 98-07-03 04:16:37 EDT

Reply-To: Kenneth Emanuelson

X-Archives:

As we head into the 4th of July it is important that we remember what the holiday is actually about... and what others gave up so we might enjoy freedom today. The story below tells what happened to the men who signed the Declaration of Independence.

What Happened to the Signers?

Five signers were captured by the British and brutally tortured as traitors. Nine fought in the War for Independence and died from wounds or from hardships they suffered. Two lost their sons in

the Continental Army. Another two had sons captured. At least a dozen of the fifty-six had their homes pillaged and burned.

What kind of men were they? Twenty-five were lawyers or jurists. Eleven were merchants. Nine were farmers or large plantation owners. One was a teacher, one a musician, and one a printer. These were men of means and education, yet they signed the Declaration of Independence, knowing full well that the penalty could be death if they were captured.

In the face of the advancing British Army, the Continental Congress fled from Philadelphia to Baltimore on December 12, 1776. It was an especially anxious time for John Hancock, the President, as his wife had just given birth to a baby girl. Due to the complications stemming from the trip to Baltimore, the child lived only a few months.

William Ellery's signing at the risk of his fortune proved only too realistic. In December 1776, during three days of British occupation of Newport, Rhode Island, Ellery's house was burned, and all his property destroyed.

Richard Stockton, a New Jersey State Supreme Court Justice, had rushed back to his estate near Princeton after signing the Declaration of Independence to find that his wife and children were living like refugees with friends. They had been betrayed by a Tory sympathizer who also revealed Stockton's own whereabouts. British troops pulled him from his bed one night, beat him and threw him in jail where he almost starved to death. When he was finally released, he went home to find his estate had been looted, his possessions burned, and his horses stolen. Judge Stockton had been so badly treated in prison that his health was ruined and he died before the war's end. His surviving family had to live the remainder of their lives off charity.

Carter Braxton was a wealthy planter and trader. One by one his ships were captured by the British navy. He loaned a large sum of money to the American cause; it was never paid back. He was forced to sell his plantations and mortgage his other properties to pay his debts.

Thomas McKean was so hounded by the British that he had to move his family almost constantly. He served in the Continental Congress without pay, and kept his family in hiding.

Vandals or soldiers or both looted the properties of Clymer, Hall, Harrison, Hopkinson and Livingston. Seventeen lost everything they owned.

Thomas Heyward, Jr., Edward Rutledge and Arthur Middleton, all of South Carolina, were captured by the British during the Charleston Campaign in 1780. They were kept in dungeons at the St. Augustine Prison until exchanged a year later.

At the Battle of Yorktown, Thomas Nelson, Jr. noted that the British General Cornwallis had taken over the family home for his headquarters. Nelson urged General George Washington to open fire on his own home. This was done, and the home was destroyed. Nelson later died bankrupt.

Francis Lewis also had his home and properties destroyed. The British jailed his wife for two months, and that and other hardships from the war so affected her health that she died only two years later.

"Honest John" Hart, a New Jersey farmer, was driven from his wife's bedside when she was near death. Their thirteen children fled for their lives. Hart's fields and his grist mill were laid waste. For over a year he eluded capture by hiding in nearby forests. He never knew where his bed would be the next night and often slept in caves. When he finally returned home, he found that his wife had

died, his children disappeared, and his farm and stock were completely destroyed. Hart himself died in 1779 without ever seeing any of his family again.

Such were the stories and sacrifices typical of those who risked everything to sign the Declaration of Independence. These men were not wild-eyed, rabble-rousing ruffians. They were soft-spoken men of means and education. They had security, but they valued liberty more. Standing tall, straight, and unwavering, they pledged:

"For the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of the Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other, our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor."

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The story comes from <http://www.self-gov.org/liberator/>

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"Americans, indeed all free men, remember that in the final choice a soldier's pack is not so heavy a burden as a prisoner's chains."

-- Dwight D. Eisenhower, First Inaugural Address, Jan. 20, 1953

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Wall Street Journal, Thursday, July 2, 1998

"Statesmanship and Its Betrayal"

By Mark Helprin When Marco Polo entered Xanadu, the capital of the great Khan, he crossed....  
(see attachment for complete file.)

Why We Will Fight, #13 Attachment #1 The Wall Street Journal Thursday, July 2, 1998 "Statesmanship and Its Betrayal" By Mark Helprin

When Marco Polo entered Xanadu, the capital of the Great Khan, he crossed ring after ring of outer city, each more splendid and interesting than the one that had come before. He was used to greatness of scale, having traveled to the limits of the ordered world and then twice as far into the unknown, where no European had ever set foot, over the Hindu Kush and beyond the Pamir, and through the immense, empty deserts of Central Asia. And yet after passing through the world's most ethereal regions he was impressed above all by Xanadu, a city of seemingly infinite expanse, the end of which he could not see no matter in which direction he looked.

For almost 1,000 years, this city floated at the peak of Western imagination. Unlike Jerusalem, it had vanished. Unlike Atlantis, someone had actually seen it. Even during the glory of the British Empire, Coleridge held it out for envy. But no more. Now it has been eclipsed, with ease, by this, our country, founded not as a Xanadu but with the greatest humility, and on the scale of yeomen and their small farms, and as the cradle of simple gifts. This country was not expected to be what it became. It was expected to be infinite-seeming in its rivers, prairies and stars, not in cities with hundreds of millions of rooms, passages, halls, and buildings a quarter-mile high. It was expected to be rich in natural silence and the quality of light rather than in uncountable dollars. It was expected to be a place of unfathomable numbers, but of blades of grass and grains of wheat and the crags of mountains, rather than millions upon millions of motors spinning and humming at any one time, and wheels turning, fires burning, voices talking and lights shining.

But this great inventory of machines, buildings, bridges, vehicles and an incomprehensible number of smaller things, is what we have. A nation founded according to a vision of simplicity

has become complex. A nation founded with disdain for power has become the most powerful nation.

### The Essential Qualities

When letters took a month by sea and the records of the U.S. government could be moved in a single wagon pulled by two horses, we had great statesmanship. We had men of integrity and genius: Washington, Hamilton, Franklin, Jefferson, Adams, Madison and Monroe. These were men who were in love with principle as if it were an art, which, in their practice, they made it. They studied empires that had fallen, for the sake of doing what was right in a small country that had barely risen, and were able to see things so clearly that they surpassed in greatness each and every one of the classical models that they had approached in awe.

Now, lost in the sins and complexity of a Xanadu, when we desperately need their high qualities of thought, their patience for deliberation, and their unerring sense of balance, we have only what we have.

Which is a political class that in the main has abandoned the essential qualities of statesmanship, with the excuse that these are inappropriate to our age. They are wrong. Not only do they fail to honor the principles of statesmanship, they fail to recognize them, having failed to learn them, having failed to have wanted to learn them.

In the main, they are in it for themselves. Were they not, they would have a higher rate of attrition, falling with the colors of what they believe rather than landing always on their feet-- adroitly, but in dishonor. In light of their vows and responsibilities, this constitutes not merely a failure but a betrayal, and not only of statesmanship and principle but of country and kin.

And why is that? It is because things matter. Even though it be played like a game, by men who excel at making it a game, our life in this country, our history in this country, the sacrifices that have been made for this country, the lives that have been given to this country, are not a game. My life is not a game. My children's lives are not a game. My parents' lives were not a game. Your life is not a game.

Yes, it is true, we do have great accumulated stores-- of power, and wealth, and decency-- against which those who pretend to lead us can draw when as a result of their vanity and ineptitude they waste and expend the gifts of previous generations. The margin of error bequeathed to them allows them to present their failures as successes.

They say, "As we are still standing, and a chicken is in the pot, what does it matter if I break the links between action and consequence, work and reward, crime and punishment, merit and advancement? I myself cannot imagine a military threat (and never could), so what does it matter if I weld shut the silo hatches on our ballistic missile submarines? What does it matter if I weld shut my eyes to weapons of mass destruction in the hands of lunatics who are building long-range missiles? Our jurisprudence is the envy of the world, so what does it matter if, now and then, I perjure myself, a little? What is an oath? What is a pledge? What is a sacred trust? Are not these things the province of the kinds of people who were foolish enough to do without all their lives, to wear ruts into the Oregon Trail, to brave the seas, to die on the beaches of Normandy and Iwo Jima and on the battlefields of Shiloh and Antietam, for me, so that I can draw from America's great accounts, and look good, and be presidential, and have fun, in all kinds of ways?"

### Blood Onto Sand

That is what they say, if not in words then, indelibly, in actions. They who, in robbing Peter to pay Paul, present themselves as payers and forget that they are also robbers. They who, with studied

compassion, minister to some of us at the expense of others. They who make goodness and charity a public profession, depending for their election upon a well-mannered embrace of these things and the power to move them not from within themselves or by their own sacrifices but, by compulsion, from others. They who, knowing very little or next to nothing, take pride in eagerly telling everyone else what to do. They who believe absolutely in their recitation of pieties not because they believe in the pieties but because they believe in themselves.

Nearly 400 years of America's hard-earned accounts-- the principles we established, the battles we fought, the morals we upheld for century after century, our very humility before God-- now flow promiscuously through our hands, like blood onto sand, squandered and laid waste by a generation that imagines history to have been but a prelude for what it itself will accomplish, More than a pity, more than a shame, such a thing is despicable. And yet, this parlous condition, this agony of weak men, this betrayal and this disgusting show, are not the end of things.

Principles are eternal. They stem not from our resolution or lack of it but from elsewhere, where in patient and infinite ranks they simply wait to be called. They can be read in history. They arise as if of their own accord when in the face of danger natural courage comes into play and honor and defiance are born. Things such as courage and honor are the mortal equivalent of certain laws written throughout the universe. The rules of symmetry and proportion, the laws of physics, the perfection of mathematics, even the principle of uncertainty, are encouragement, entirely independent of the vagaries of human will, that not only natural law but our own best aspirations have a life of their own. They have lasted through far greater abuse than abuses them now. They can be neglected, but they cannot be lost. They can be thrown down, but they cannot be broken.

Each of them is a different expression of a single quality, from which each arises in its hour of need. Some come to the fore, as others stay back, and then, with changing circumstance, those that have gone unnoticed rise to the occasion. Rise to the occasion. The principle suggests itself from a phrase, and such principles suggest easily and flow generously. You can grab them out of the air, from phrases, from memories, from images. A statesman must rise to the occasion. Even Democrats can do this. Harry Truman had the discipline of plowing a straight row 10, 12 and 14 hours a day, of rising and retiring with the sun, of struggling with temperamental machinery, of suffering heat and cold and one injury after another. After a short time on the farm, presumptions about ruling others tend to vanish. It is as if you are pulled to earth and held there.

The man who works the land is hard put to think that he would direct armies and nations. Truman understood the grave responsibility of being the president of the United States, and that it was a task too great for him or anyone else to accomplish without doing a great deal of injury-- if not to some, then to others. He understood that, therefore, he had to transcend himself. There would be little enjoyment of the job, because he had to be always aware of the enormous consequences of everything he did. Contrast this with the unspeakably vulgar pleasure in office of President Clinton.

Truman, absolutely certain that the mantle he assumed was far greater than he could ever be, was continually and deliberately aware of the weight of history, the accomplishments of his predecessors, and, by humble projection, his own inadequacy. The sobriety and care that derived from this allowed him a rare privilege for modern presidents, to give to the presidency more than he took from it. It is not possible to occupy the Oval Office without arrogantly looting its assets or nobly adding to them. May God bless the president who adds to them, and may God damn the president who loots them.

America would not have come out of the Civil War as it did had it not been led by men like Lincoln and Lee. The battles raged for four years, but for 100 years the country, both North and South, modeled itself on their characters. They exemplified almost perfectly Churchill's statement that "public men charged with the conduct of the war should live in a continual stress of soul."



This continual stress of soul is necessary as well in peacetime, because for every good deed in public life there is a counterbalance. Benefits are given only after taxes are taken. That is part of governance. The statesman, who represents the whole nation, sees in the equilibrium for which he strives a continual tension between victory and defeat. If he did not understand this, he would have no stress of soul, he would be merely happy-- about money showered upon the orphan, taken from the widow. About children sent to day care, so that they may be long absent from their parents. About merciful parole, of criminals who kill again. Whereas a statesman knows continual stress of soul, a politician is happy, for he knows not what he does.

It is difficult for individuals or nations to recognize that war and peace alternate. But they do. No matter how long peace may last, it will end in war. Though most people cannot believe at this moment that the United States of America will ever again fight for its survival, history guarantees that it will. And, when it does, most people will not know what to do. They will believe of war, as they did of peace, that it is everlasting. The statesman, who is different from everyone else, will, in the midst of common despair, see the end of war, just as during the peace he was alive to the inevitability of war, and saw it coming in the far distance, as if it were a gray wave moving quietly across a dark sea.

The politician will revel with his people and enjoy their enjoyments. The statesman, in continual stress of soul, will think of destruction. As others move in the light, he will move in darkness, so that as others move in darkness, he may move in the light. This tenacity, that is given to those of long and insistent vision, is what saves nations.

A statesman must have a temperament that is suited for the Medal of Honor, in a soul that is unafraid to die. Electorates rightly favor those who have endured combat, not as a matter of reward for service, as is commonly believed, but because the willingness of a soldier to give his life is a strong sign of his correct priorities, and that in the future he will truly understand that statesmen are not rulers but servants. It seems clear that even in these years of squalid degradation that having risked death for the sake of honor is better than having risked dishonor for the sake of life.

### Hunger for a Statesman

No matter what you are told by the sophisticated classes that see virtue in every form of corruption and corruption in every form of virtue, I think you know, as I do, that the American people hunger for acts of integrity and courage. The American people hunger for a statesman magnetized by the truth, unwilling to give up his good name, uninterested in calculation only for the sake of victory, unable to put his interests before those of the nation. What this means in practical terms is no focus groups, no polls, no triangulation, no evasion, no broken promises and no lies. These are the tools of the chameleon. They are employed to cheat the American people of honest answers to direct questions. If the average politician, for fear that he may lose something, is incapable of even a genuine yes or no, how is he supposed to rise to the great occasions of state? How is he supposed to face a destructive and implacable enemy? How is he supposed to understand the rightful destiny of his country, and lead it there?

At the coronation of an English monarch, he is given a sword. Elizabeth II took it last, and as she held it before the altar, she heard these words: "Receive this kingly Sword, brought now from the altar of God and delivered to you by us, the Bishops and servants of God, though unworthy. With this Sword do justice, stop the growth of iniquity, protect the holy Church of God, help and defend widows and orphans, restore the things that are gone to decay, maintain the things that are restored, punish and reform what is amiss, and confirm what is in good order; that doing these things you may be glorious in all virtue, and so faithfully serve our Lord."

Would that we in America come once again to understand that statesmanship is not the appetite for power but-- because things matter-- a holy calling of self-abnegation and self-sacrifice. We have made it something else. Nonetheless, after and despite its betrayal, statesmanship remains the manifestation, in political terms, of beauty, and balance, and truth. It is the courage to tell the truth, and thus discern what is ahead. It is a mastery of the symmetry of forces, illuminated by the genius of speaking to the heart of things.

Statesmanship is a quality that, though it may be betrayed, is always ready to be taken up again merely by honest subscription to its great themes. Have confidence that even in idleness its strengths are growing, for it is a providential gift given to us in times of need. Evidently we do not need it now, but as the world is forever interesting the time will surely come when we do. And then, so help me God, I believe that, solely by the grace of God, the corrupt will be thrown down and the virtuous will rise up.

(Mr. Helprin, a novelist, is a contributing editor of the Journal. This is adapted from a speech delivered to the Hillsdale College Shavano Institute.)



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